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Agriculture, Mining, Forestry, and Fisheries

The World's Cotton Crops. By JOHN A. TODD. (London: A. & C. Black, Ltd. 1915. Pp. xiii, 460. Illustrated. 10s.)

"The main factor in the future of the cotton trade is that of supply. Demand at a reasonable price may be almost taken for granted." This conclusion is drawn by Professor Todd from a brief comparison of price changes, raw cotton production, and increase in manufacturing capacity during recent years, with reference also to the potential demand of the world for cotton goods. He therefore considers the great problem for cotton manufacturers to be: "Whence are larger supplies of raw cotton to be obtained in the future?" In order to shed light upon this question, this book has been written. It furnishes a description of the present conditions and future prospects of raw cotton production in all parts of the globe. Especial attention is paid to the experiments which are being carried on with the assistance of cotton-growing associations and government aid in Asia and Africa. For each district a description is given of the agricultural and climatic conditions, methods of cultivation, transportation facilities, ginning, baling, and pressing methods, and other factors affecting raw cotton production.

Whether or not one is willing to grant that the question of supplies of raw material is as predominant a factor as Professor Todd believes, nevertheless there is no doubt that the cotton manufacturing industry of the world will continue to expand and that the larger and larger supplies of raw cotton will be needed. It is well worth while, therefore, to consider the possible sources whence these supplies may be secured.

Professor Todd is less optimistic about the prospects for an increased production in the United States than in most other countries. The boll weevil is a serious hindrance and the lack of sufficient labor at low wages presents an almost insuperable difficulty. He speaks disparagingly of the negroes and considers them less satisfactory as farm laborers than during the days of slavery. But, in view of the relatively small profits in cotton raising in this country, he believes that cotton is and must remain a "black man's crop"; the conditions are not favorable for the white farmer. Hence a speedy check to the spread of cotton growing in Texas and other western states is anticipated. It is doubtful, however, if the prospects are actually as poor

as Professor Todd states. His conclusions regarding the new enterprises in Asia and Africa, on the other hand, reflect the enthusiasm of the promoters; prolonged experience with "cheap labor" may necessitate important qualifications.

In describing the methods of baling and handling cotton in the United States, the careless practices which disgrace the American cotton bale are again criticised and a plausible remedy is suggested. The cause of these conditions is found to lie in the lack of continuity of interest and in the system of sampling. From the gin to the factory the cotton passes through numerous hands and no one is held responsible for the wretched condition in which the cotton finally arrives. Lack of responsibility results in lack of care. Furthermore, according to present trading methods, the cotton must be sampled at various stages in the marketing process, and at each sampling a fresh hole is dug into the bale, never to be patched up. The remedy would be to have the bale compressed at the gin and a set of certified samples taken from the press box, rendering further sampling unnecessary. The immediate adoption of this reform is not to be expected, owing to the influence of old customs and the opposition of vested interests.

A concluding chapter summarizes some of the effects of the war upon the cotton trade during the autumn of 1914. Useful statistical tables are given in the appendix.

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